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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5154
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1943
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4688
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001237

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PAPUA -- NEW DISTRICTS; KEY ELECTION STILL IN LIMBO

REF: JAKARTA 1092 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The GOI has announced the creation of five new regencies (districts) in Papua Province in eastern Indonesia. The provincial government opposed the move but was powerless to stop it. Many Papuans see the new regencies as part of a long-standing Jakarta "divide and rule" strategy. Meanwhile, the Indonesian legislature endorsed a new law bringing all of Papua region under Special Autonomy. In other Papua-related news, the ongoing dispute over election results in the key mining district of Mimika continues with no end in sight. END SUMMARY.

NEW REGENCIES

12. (SBU) On June 21, Home Affairs Minister Mardiyanto (one name only) announced the creation of five new regencies (districts) in Papua Province. The areas covered are: Central Mamberamo, Yalimo, Lanny Jaya, Nduga, and Puncak. The government has carved the new regencies out of several existing ones--chiefly Nabire, Paniai and Jayawijaya--but has not yet delineated the exact boundaries of the new regencies. With the additions, Papua Province now has 22 regencies.

13. (SBU) Mardiyanto also announced the appointment of five temporary regents (district administrators) for the new areas. The appointed regents will serve for one year in order to set up local administrations. They must also organize elections to select new regents who will serve a regular five-year term.

14. (C) The Papuan provincial government is not happy with the new regencies. Governor Barnabas Suebu opposed creation of the new regencies but could do nothing to prevent it, according Ronald Tapilatu, one of his key advisors. Tapilatu told poloff that the decision had come directly from the national House of Representatives (DPR) and the Department of Home Affairs, and was "a national decision, not a Papuan one." A noticeably angry Tapilatu fumed that since the

Provincial government had no voice in the DPR, the Governor could do nothing to block the new regencies.

15. (C) Tapilatu alleged that the DPR had moved forward with the new divisions solely to create additional seats for the 2009 legislative election. Many Papuans share the view that Jakarta has moved forward with the new regencies as part of a "divide and rule strategy" with little concern for the impact on Papua.

16. (C) Many Papua watchers have also criticized the new regencies. Human rights lawyer and chairman of the Papua Forum Albert Hasibuan told poloff that the new regencies would likely create new governance problems. There were not enough well-trained and non-corrupt civil servants to staff the administration of preexisting regencies, Hasibuan asserted. Creating new ones would only magnify the problem.

MOVEMENT ON SPECIAL AUTONOMY

17. (C) The DPR voted on June 24 to resolve one outstanding matter concerning Papua's Special Autonomy Law. Legislators endorsed Perpu 1/2008--a government regulation that formally extends the Special Autonomy Law to West Papua Province. (Note: Former President Megawati created West Papua Province by presidential decree in 2003. Megawati created the new province outside the framework of the 2001 Special Autonomy Law and the legal status of West Papua has been in doubt ever since.) The move resolves a long-standing legal ambiguity regarding West Papua Province that has been a source of much Papuan resentment toward Jakarta.

ELECTION STILL IN LIMBO

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18. (C) One of Papua Province's better known regencies continues to experience some turbulence. Mimika--the central Papua regency that is home to the giant Grasberg copper and gold mine operated by U.S. company Freeport-McMoRan--still awaits final results from its May 19 local election (reftel). After nearly three weeks of counting and recounting of ballots, the local Election Commission took the unusual step of announcing final vote totals but not declaring a winner. (Note: The winning candidates, Klemen Tinal and H. Abd Muis, prevailed by less than 1400 votes--approximately two percent of the 84,000 ballots cast.)

19. (C) The losing candidates immediately challenged the vote count in Mimika court. The court referred the matter to the province's highest court, based in the capital Jayapura. Observers expect many more months of legal challenges, with the matter likely ending up in the Indonesian Supreme Court before it is finally settled. In the meantime, an interim regent and vice regent continue in office and Mimika remains tense, although there have not been any incidents of violence connected with the election dispute as of yet.

HUME